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Letter dated 8 December 2000 from the Chairman of the Latin American and Caribbean Regional Preparatory Meeting addressed to the Chairman of the Preparatory Committee for the United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects*

In my capacity as Chairman of the Regional Preparatory Meeting of the Latin American and Caribbean States for the 2001 United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, which took place in Brasilia from 22 to 24 November 2000, it is my pleasure to forward to you the text of the Brasilia Declaration (see annex), which was adopted by consensus. I kindly request you to distribute it as an official document of the Preparatory Committee.

The Latin American and Caribbean Regional Preparatory Meeting succeeded in presenting what I consider to be a very meaningful contribution to the work of the Preparatory Committee. Your personal participation in the Brasilia meeting and that of Under-Secretary-General Jayantha Dhanapala greatly enriched our discussions and reflect the importance of regional perspectives in the preparatory process for the 2001 Conference.

(*Signed*) Luiz Augusto de Araujo **Castro**
Chairman of the Latin American and
Caribbean Regional Preparatory Meeting

* This document has also been circulated as a document of the General Assembly (A/55/679).

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Annex

Brasilia Declaration of the Regional Preparatory Meeting of the Latin American and Caribbean States for the 2001 United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects

Itamaraty Palace, Brasilia
22-24 November 2000

1. From 22 to 24 November 2000, the representatives of the Latin American and Caribbean States gathered in Brasilia to seek a common approach in order to contribute with a regional perspective to the work of the United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, to be convened in New York from 9 to 20 July 2001, and its Preparatory Committee, so that it may effectively and comprehensively help to address the problems resulting from illicit small arms trafficking.

2. The representatives of the Latin American and Caribbean States reaffirmed the importance of a common approach to the 2001 United Nations Conference that would take into account specific needs and experiences in individual regions, subregions and countries.

3. The representatives acknowledged the pioneering efforts that led to the timely and comprehensive negotiation and conclusion at the Organization of American States of the Inter-American Convention against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Ammunition, Explosives and Other Related Materials.

4. The representatives recalled that the Latin American and Caribbean States share an unshakeable commitment to the basic norms of international law and to those principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations and the Charter of the Organization of American States: sovereign equality of States; the peaceful resolution of disputes; the prohibition of the use or threat of use of force; and non-intervention in the internal affairs of States.

5. The spirit of friendship and cooperation that has traditionally characterized relations among the Latin American and Caribbean States has been translated into political action through various initiatives and undertakings, in a number of regional and subregional institutions and mechanisms: the Organization of American States, the Association of Caribbean States, the Central American Integration System, the Andean Community, the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), Mercosur and its Associated States and the Rio Group. The consolidation of Latin America and the Caribbean as a zone of peace and cooperation, free of inter-State territorial disputes, is an enduring aspiration and ongoing accomplishment of the entire region.

6. The representatives took note with satisfaction of the Declaration on the Recovery of Illicit Arms in Civilian Hands in Central America, signed by the Presidents of Central America in January 1997, as a regional contribution to the efforts to diminish the scourge caused by the illicit trade and improper use of small arms and light weapons.

7. The representatives recalled that the illicit trade in small arms in the region is mainly related to drug trafficking, terrorism, transnational organized crime, mercenary activities and other criminal acts and conduct. Crime prevention must thus be an integral part of the approach to combating the illicit trade in small arms.

8. The representatives considered that the Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons provides a promising opportunity to address this problem, in a manner which would alleviate the plight of populations besieged by criminality and armed conflicts which are fuelled by this illicit trade, and bring benefits in terms of social and economic development and national, regional and international stability.

9. The representatives reiterated their determination to participate actively in the United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects. Furthermore, the Latin American and Caribbean States expressed the belief that the United Nations Conference should adopt

a political declaration and a global programme of action.

10. The representatives expressed their support for the work of the Chairman of the Preparatory Committee and welcomed his proposals on the objectives and programme of action as an appropriate basis for continuing with the preparatory process, and made comments and suggestions with a view to developing those proposals.

11. The representatives reaffirmed the commitment to participate actively in the negotiations on the Protocol against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Their Parts and Components and Ammunition, with a view to their conclusion in order to strengthen international cooperation in this field.

12. The representatives highlighted the importance of an adequate participation of civil society in the preparatory process and in the Conference in order to contribute to its objectives. In this context, the representatives noted the importance of a balanced representation of NGOs relevant to the scope and purpose of the Conference, which should include appropriate participation of entities from developing countries.

13. The representatives reaffirmed the importance of Article 51 of the Charter of the United Nations and agreed that the outcome of the Conference shall not undermine in any way their inherent right to self-defence, which implies that States also have the right to acquire arms with which to defend themselves.

14. The representatives agreed that the Conference should seek to accomplish the following goals:

(a) To consolidate a global, balanced and non-discriminatory approach to the issue of the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons, which takes into account the specificities and experiences of regions, subregions and individual countries;

(b) To strengthen international cooperation in all its aspects (judicial, technical, financial and between law enforcement agencies), and to ensure that the mechanisms established for that purpose benefit all affected regions, subregions and countries;

(c) To recognize the importance of the implementation of national measures taken by affected States in post-conflict situations for the recovery of small arms and light weapons. In this regard, the countries which are implementing such measures should be supported by the international community;

(d) To recommend the adoption of concrete measures, which should be characterized by a flexible, practical and multifaceted approach that would confer upon regions, subregions and countries the necessary capacity in the formulation of those plans that most adequately suit their real needs and specific problems;

(e) To promote constructive and pragmatic approaches within the scope of the Conference;

(f) To highlight the importance of regional, subregional and national experiences and to examine new initiatives and undertakings that may further complement, reinforce and politically strengthen measures and agreements already adopted or in the process of implementation;

(g) To acknowledge that civil society has an important role to play in achieving the goals of the Conference, which could be furthered, including by educational initiatives and publicity campaigns.

15. The representatives acknowledged that the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace, Disarmament and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean has an important role in the promotion of United Nations activities in this field and welcomed its contributions to the preparatory process of the 2001 Conference.

16. After recalling the credentials and expertise of Ambassador Camilo Reyes Rodriguez of Colombia in the fields of diplomacy and disarmament, the representatives of the Latin American and Caribbean States reiterated their full support for his candidacy to chair the United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, and noted with satisfaction the endorsement of this candidature by the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries.

17. The representatives expressed their recognition of the excellent support given by the Government of Brazil to host the Regional Preparatory Meeting of the Latin American and Caribbean States, which allowed the region to present its contribution to the success of the 2001 United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects.

Brasilia, 24 November 2000